IN HONOR OF THE DEDICATED FIRE PERSONNEL OF DELAWARE

HON. MICHAEL N. CASTLE

OF DELAWARE

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, September 5, 2001

Mr. CASTLE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to twenty Delaware firefighters who bravely and unselfishly traveled to the State of Washington state to help combat the Wenatchee National Forest wildfires. The group was comprised of seven firefighters from the Delaware Department of Agriculture Forest Service and thirteen from various fire companies in Delaware.

Firefighters provide one of the most valuable services imaginable to this country and its people—that of saving lives and safeguarding our precious lands. With integrity, firefighters preserve the safety in the communities they serve. These brave men and women have demonstrated their community is not limited to the State of Delaware, but their commitment extends to the nation as a whole. Every year, firefighters are injured, and even die, in the service of their esteemed duty. Firefighting is one of the hardest jobs imaginable, and it is frequently rewarded only by the satisfaction that they have made their communities safer.

Mr. Speaker, allow me to recognize here these men and women individually for their service and valor. The firefighters are Teri Guy of Camden; Todd Gsell of Chestertown, Maryland; Kevin Hauer and Mike Valenti of Dover; Kevin and Todd Schaffer of Downington, Pennsylvania; Mike Brown of Hartley; Andrew Mathe of Hockessin; Erich Burkentine of Lewes; Sam Sloan of Millsboro; Guy Cooper of Millville; Matt Dotterer of Milton; Glenn Gladders, Chris Gorzynski, Mike Puglisi and Steve Reeves of Newark; Josh McGrath and Mike Sethman of Smyrna, Franny Cole of Townsend and Nikki Waller of Wilmington.

It is often said that nothing is bigger than the heart of a volunteer. I think that is especially true for these dedicated men and women of Delaware who serve not only our state, but protect the nation as whole. For all their courage, their strength, their selflessness, and their dedication, I salute each and every one of them.

HUMAN CLONING PROHIBITION ACT OF 2001

SPEECH OF

HON. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE

OF TEXAS

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, July 31, 2001

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I rise in opposition to H.R. 2505, The Human Cloning Prohibition Act of 2001. I am absolutely opposed to any cloning that results in the creation of a human life and/or a pregnancy. That is why I support the Greenwood-Deutsch-Schiff-DeGette Amendment, legislation that prohibits such cloning but allows the opportunity for medical research.

As I have already stated, I believe that the science of cloning deserves serious consideration. As has been evidenced by the prior hearings and debate on this issue, the knowledge of the scientific community in this field is still in its infancy, particularly in the field of stem cell research. It is crucial that Congress carefully consider all options regarding this issue before it proceeds, particularly before we undertake to criminalize aspects of this practice. We must carefully balance society's need for lifesaving scientific research against the numerous moral, ethical, social and scientific issues that this issue raises. Yet what we face here today is legislation that threatens to stop this valuable research, in the face of evidence that we should permit this research to continue.

Those of us who believe in the Greenwood-Deutsch-Schiff-DeGette substitute are not proposing and are not proponents of human cloning. What we are proponents of is the Bush Administration's NIH report June 2001 entitled ''Stem Cells: Scientific Progress and Future Research Directions.'' This report, as I will discuss further, acknowledges the importance of therapeutic cloning.

None of us want to ensure that human beings come out of the laboratory. In fact, I am very delighted to note that language in the legislation that I am supporting, the Greenwood-Deutsch-Schiff-DeGette legislation, specifically says that it is unlawful to use or attempt to use human somatic cell nuclear transfer technology or the product of such technology to initiate a pregnancy to create a human being. But what we can do is save lives.

For the many people come into my office who are suffering from Parkinson's disease, Alzheimer's, neurological paralysis, diabetes, stroke, Lou Gehrig's disease, and cancer, or infertility the Weldon bill questions whether that science can continue. I believe it is important to support the substitute, and I would ask my colleagues to do so.

What we can and must accept as a useful and necessary practice is the use of the cloning technique to conduct embryonic stem cell research. This work shows promise in the effort to treat and even cure many devastating diseases and injuries, such as sickle cell anemia, spinal cord damage and Parkinson's disease through valuable stem cell research. This research also brings great hope to those who now languish for years or die waiting for a donor organ or tissue. Yet just as we are seeing the value of such research, H.R. 2505 would seek not only to stop this research, but also to criminalize it. We must pause for a moment to consider what conduct should be criminalized.

Those who support the Human Cloning Prohibition Act contend that it will have no negative impact on the field of stem cell research. However, the findings of the report that the National Institutes of Health released in June 2001 are to the contrary. This report states that only clonally derived embryonic stem cells truly hold the promise of generating replacement cells and tissues to treat and cure many devastating diseases. It is ironic at the same time that while the Weldon bill has been making its way through the House, the Administration's NIH is declaring that that the very research that the bill seeks to prohibit is of significant value to all of us.

An embryonic stem cell is derived from a group of cells called the inner cell mass, which is part of the early embryo called the blastocyst. Once removed from the blastocyst, the cells of the inner cell mass can be cultured into embryonic stem cells; this is known as somatic cell nuclear transfer. It is important to note that these cells are not themselves embryos. Evidence indicates that these cells do not behave in the laboratory as they would in the developing embryo.

The understanding of how pluripotent stem cells work has advanced dramatically just since 1998, when a scientist at the University of Wisconsin isolated stem cells from human embryos. Although some progress has been made in adult stem cell research, at this point there is no isolated population of adult stem cells that is capable of forming all the kinds of cells of the body. Adult stem cells are rare, difficult to identify, isolate and purify and do not replicate indefinitely in culture.

Conversely, pluripotent stem cells have the ability to develop into all the cells of the body. The only known sources of human pluripotent stem cells are those isolated and cultured from early human embryos and from certain fetal tissue. There is no evidence that adult stem cells are pluripotent.

Further, human pluripotent stem cells from embryos are by their nature clonally derived—that is, generated by the division of a single cell and genetically identical to that cell. Clonality is important for researchers for several reasons. To fully understand and harness the ability of stem cells to generate replacement cells and tissues, the each identity of those cells' genetic capabilities and functional qualities must be known. Very few studies show that adult stem cells have these properties. Hence, now that we are on the cusp of even greater discoveries, we should not take an action that will cut off these valuable scientific developments that are giving new hope to millions of Americans. For example, it may be possible to treat many diseases, such as diabetes and Parkinson's, by transplanting human embryonic cells. To avoid immunological rejection of these cells ''it has been suggested that . . . [a successful transplant] could be accomplished by using somatic cell nuclear transfer technology (so called therapeutic cloning), . . .'' according to the NIH.

Hence, although I applaud the intent of H.R. 2505, I have serious concerns about it. H.R. 2505 would impose criminal penalties not only on those who attempt to clone for reproductive purposes, but also on those who engage in research cloning, such as stem cell and infertility research, to expand the boundaries of useful scientific knowledge. These penalties would extend to those who ship or receive product of human cloning. And these penalties are severe—imprisonment of up to ten years and a civil penalty of up to one million dollars, not to exceed more than two times the gross pecuniary gain of the violator. Many questions remain unanswered about stem cell research, and we must permit the inquiry to continue so that these answers can be found. In addition to research into treatments and cures for life threatening diseases, I am also particularly concerned about the possible effect on the